

From the corner

Testing for Ethics



We as lawyers and legal professionals look to written rules to guide us. We take classes in legal ethics, read books, and have lengthy discussions about what is the right thing to do in sometimes ethically ambiguous situations.

The primary source of a code of ethics for legal professionals is the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct. These rules lay out in over 30 rules, 100 pages accompanied by over 600 standards for dealing with matters such as conflicts of interest, competency, confidentiality, and setting fees.

While these are helpful for guiding our conduct as lawyers, Rotary International, a service organization dedicated to encouraging high ethical standards in all vocations, developed a "4-way test" that we can apply not only to the practice of law, but also to how we interact with our client representatives, co-workers, friends, and families.

The "Rotary 4-way Test", asks us to consider the following questions whenever we make a decision:

- Is it the truth?
- Is it fair to all concerned?
- Will it build good will and better friendships?
- Will it be beneficial to all concerned?

We would do well to answer these questions when we work with our client representatives and with one another on behalf of the people of Harris County, of service to all according to law and according to high ethical standards.

Happy Anniversary!

Thank you for your service to the public:

| | |
|------------------|----------|
| Melanie Rodney | 1 year |
| Leah Gordon | 6 years |
| Lynette Williams | 5 years |
| Tempie Thompson | 9 years |
| April Baker | 10 years |
| Juan Alarcon | 15 years |
| Fran Joubert | 16 years |
| Jana Brandt | 17 years |
| Terry Lindner | 17 years |
| Eileen Begle | 20 years |
| Stella Cox | 20 years |
| William Cox | 20 years |
| Sandra Hachem | 20 years |
| Charles Moritz | 28 years |

County Attorney Employee Alert Line

Call 713-755-1502 for information about Office operations during inclement weather or other emergencies.



Are you ready for some football?



Front: Yvette Cortez, Cheryl Ratliff, Michelle Onorato, Chan Buckner, Franchell Joubert, Curtrina Majors Back: Darlene Hadaway, Jennifer Odom, Leslie Austin, Danell Ortega

In celebration of the beginning of football season, HCAO staff wore the jerseys of their favorite football teams on Friday, September 7th. Special thanks to Yvette Cortez and Jennifer Odom for suggesting the celebration. Your ideas for fun events are always welcome.

Deputy Constable employment suit dismissed



Diana Pacheco

Barbara Callistien

U. S. Magistrate Mary Milloy granted summary judgment in favor of Harris County and Constable Jones in a discrimination lawsuit on September 7th. The judge rejected the employees claims that he was treated differently than "similarly situated" co-workers. The case was difficult because of unsettled law on several points. Plaintiff had taken twelve depositions and the motions for summary judgment were complicated with voluminous exhibits. Senior Assistant County Attorney Barbara Callistien and Paralegal Diana Pacheco handled the matter. Barbara reports that "Diana (once again) was indispensable and a critical factor resulting in our success."

Neighbors cry foul over backyard chickens

The Office of the Harris County Attorney is helping residents in Spring who are complaining about the noise and pungent odor coming from the backyard of a neighbor who has 25 to 30 chickens and five roosters. Our Office has the authority to enforce deed restrictions as part of our community protection activities. Randy Smidt, Compliance Practice Group Manager, visited the property and determined that the chickens run afoul of the residential deed restrictions for the neighborhood. The owner of the chickens has agreed to comply with the restrictions. [Click here](#) to watch the KTRK television report.





The Office of Vince Brann
County Attorney

WE, THE MEMBERS OF THE HARRIS COUNTY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE, BOTH LAWYERS AND NON-LAWYERS, ADHERE TO THE HIGHEST STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL ETHICS AS WE SERVE THE PEOPLE OF HARRIS COUNTY AND STRIVE TO BE THE BEST PUBLIC LAW FIRM IN THE UNITED STATES.

NEWS



Montrose aims at nuisance abatement [Houston News](#)
State pressures Harris County on voters [Sacramento Bee](#)
Prosecutors partner with Debt Collectors [New York Times](#)
2nd Texas county in voter purge standoff [Ft. Worth Star](#)
Judge orders tough rules for Treasures [Fox 26](#)
Commissioners support Metro plan [Houston News](#)



"Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep."--Scott Adams

When a HOT check is a good thing



Assistant County Attorney Mimi Han, Paralegal Tiffany Toomey, and assistant Edith Conerly show a \$100,000 check received from a hotel for a partial payment on the highest judgment ever obtained in a hotel occupancy tax (HOT) case. The lawsuit under Mimi's supervision was filed in April and resulted in a \$233,000 judgment. The Hotel has agreed to make regular payments on the balance. Our Office collects hotel occupancy taxes on behalf of Harris County and the Houston Sports Authority.

Coming Attractions

- Sep. 27 CLE: Regulation of Sexually Oriented Businesses
- Oct. 5 HBA Judicial Preference Poll due
- Oct. 9 Last day to register to Vote
- Oct. 10 2 pm Election Law CLE, Driscoll Courtroom
- Oct. 11 CLE: Property Tax Appraisal and Assessment
- Oct. 22 Early Voting Begins
- Oct. 25 CLE: Wills & Probate

New phone training



Barbara Herndandez and Cara Protain have been working with ITC on the new telephone system for Congress Plaza. This is part of a county wide upgrade of phones. Training classes begin Wednesday, September 26th. Sign up at the front desk on the 15th floor, 1019 Congress for a class.

Shilpa Ghurye joins HCHD as attorney

Shilpa Ghurye has been appointed Assistant County Attorney to work with the Hospital District Practice Group under a program approved by Commissioners Court that allows our Office to hire temporary attorneys. Shilpa began interning for our Office in 2011. She holds a juris doctorate from South Texas College of Law, a Ph.D. in immunology from the University of Texas, and a Master of Science degree in biochemistry from the University of Bombay.



Jennifer Davis appointed ACA for CPD

Jennifer Davis has joined our office as an Assistant County Attorney to work in Protective Services-Juvenile Practice Group in the 315th District Court Team.

Jennifer earned her juris doctorate from Northeastern University School of Law in Boston. She holds a Master of Social Work degree from the University of Missouri. Prior to law school, she worked with neglected and abused children in the St. Louis area.



Marissa Williams, Communications Intern

Marissa Williams has joined the Office of the County Attorney as a communications intern to help with internal and external communications. Marissa is a native Houstonian and a recent graduate of the University of Houston, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from the Jack J. Valenti School of Communication. Marissa is preparing for graduate school.



Useful Links

- County Attorney [SharePoint](#)
- County Attorney [Policy Manual](#)
- County Personnel [Regulations](#)
- County Attorney [Style Manual](#)
- County Attorney [Website](#)
- Payroll reports & benefits [on-line](#)
- County Attorney [Directory](#)
- County Attorney on [Facebook](#)

HCAO, AG work on prehistoric site issues



This is what Assistant County Attorneys Clarrisa Kay Bauer and Glen Van Slyke saw when they recently visited the site where prehistoric human remains were found.

On Wednesday, September 12th, the Office of the Harris County Attorney filed a Notice of Appeal on behalf of the Harris County Historical Commission following a trial court's order allowing TxDot to begin the removal of ancient human remains and artifacts from the path of the Grand Parkway. The notice of appeal stops the removal until the court of appeals rules or the matter is resolved. Our Office has been in talks with the Attorney General to negotiate a resolution that allows the Grand Parkway to proceed while taking into account the concerns expressed by archeologists, historians and Native American groups.

The human remains are believed to be some of the oldest in North America, over 9,000 years old and from an era when humans used darts for hunting and began to settle in territories. The bones apparently were bundled for burial in an area that archaeologists believe was a seasonal campsite for small groups.

Classia Kay Bauer, Glen Van Slyke, Brian Quinterro, and Mike Hull are the Assistant County Attorneys assigned to this case.

CLE on Nuisance Abatement



On Thursday, September 13th, Senior Assistant County Attorney Laura Cahill presented "Nuisance Abatement and How Communities Can Use Civil Action." Laura's presentation focused on nuisance abatement and how filing a civil action can help a community. This is one of a series of continuing legal education classes offered by the Office of the Harris County Attorney. Laura has been with the Office for about 15 years and was assigned to work with management districts on community protection matters in June 2011.

Doug Ray discusses voting law on LWV-TV

Senior Assistant County Attorney Douglas Ray appeared on the League of Women Voters-Houston television program on Thursday, September 6th, to discuss the role the Office of the County Attorney plays in the election



process. Our Office provides legal advice to the Tax Assessor Collector-Voter Registrar about voter registration issues and to the County Clerk about the conduct of the election to proactively insure that all federal and state laws are being followed. You can view it at <http://www.youtube.com/user/HarrisCountyAttorney>.

JR Harris, Jimmy Jones confirmed among living



JR Harris explains to ABC13 that the reports of his demise have been exaggerated.

Assistant County Attorneys JR Harris and Jimmy Jones were two of over 9,000 persons who received notices from Harris County Tax Assessor-Collector Voter Registrar Don Sumners requesting that they provide evidence that they were alive. Sumners sent the letters based on lists provided by the Secretary of State, but after determining the databases were unreliable, the Assessor announced he would not cancel registrations based on the failure of persons to respond to the letters.

The state cut off the county's election funds to force compliance with the dead-voter purge. County election officials threatened to sue to restore funding. On September 20th the SOS agreed to restore the funds after Sumners agreed to purge voters whose families confirm their deaths before the election. Assistant County Attorneys Douglas Ray and Fred Keys were among the attorneys who are working on this matter.